

# Chapter Six

## Centreville Historic Overlay District

### Design Guidelines

#### Introduction

One of the goals of this CLR as identified by the Park Authority was to develop design guidelines appropriate for consideration for an expanded Centreville Historic Overlay District. The basis for the development of the guidelines was the understanding of the historic character of Mount Gilead and its environs generated through preparation of the CLR. The guidelines were to consider the evolution and character of the cultural landscape of the Mount Gilead property, and, to a lesser degree, the historic properties associated with the existing Centreville Historic Overlay District in order to articulate the components that contribute to the character of the district. The CLR was to provide guidelines aimed at maintaining this character through recommended management practices and parameters for the design of new development. While future development is likely to occur, it will need to respect and strengthen important historic characteristics of the district, taking into consideration the role of adaptive reuse, reconstruction, infill, and the appropriate levels and character of development within the district.

The design guidelines that comprise this chapter are based upon the understanding of the cultural landscape of the Centreville community and the Mount Gilead property gained through preparation of this Cultural Landscape Report (CLR). They are intended to support carefully conceived new development within this historic community, which retains a sense of place and a fair number of features representative of the landscape that evolved through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The character of a place is easily altered by haphazard development and design. Character is retained through compatibility between buildings, similarities among the basic characteristics, materials, massing, set-backs, and spatial relationships. While compatibility in building characteristics is an essential element to providing a sense of place, equally important is variation of buildings that reflect the individual owner and use of the building. These guidelines are intended to serve as a useful manual and reference for the continued preservation of the Centreville Historic Overlay District and the appropriate integration of new construction within an expanded district.

The elements that survive in Centreville are a rare local example of an earlier time, and are important to provide the community with roots, given the constant degree of change

that is occurring within this part of Fairfax County. The people of Centreville clearly take pride in and identify with the place in which they live. New development will continue to occur in the areas proposed for inclusion within the Centreville Historic Overlay District; the guidelines provided below are intended to help shape the character and configuration of the new development to ensure that it becomes a welcome addition that fits in with, rather than fights, the community's sense of place.

This chapter is comprised of four sections in addition to this introduction: Summary of Historic Overlay District Character; Goals for the District; Identification of District Zones and Entry Points; and Guidelines and Recommendations for the Historic Overlay District. The Summary of Historic Overlay District Character section describes the overall character of the historic community, including patterns of spatial organization, zoning, and land uses. The roots and origins of these features are described, including the development pattern history of Newgate; Centreville and its original town grid; the Civil War and its aftermath; and the effects of suburbanization. Features that stand in contrast with the inherent qualities and character of the historic community are identified, and the ways in which they conflict with the goals for the district are illustrated. The Goals for the District section lists and describes the ways in which the use of guidelines are intended to support perpetuation of a cohesive community that enhances quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The Identification of District Zones and Entry Points introduces the three types of settings that occur within the district, or are proposed to occur, for which site-specific guidelines have been prepared. These include 1) the village core; 2) the village edge; and 3) gateways. The Guidelines for the Historic Overlay District section addresses both landscape and architectural resources, with a broad, synthetic view that weaves together such elements as site organization with architectural details. Although buildings are generally the most conspicuous elements of a development project, their visual character and their relationship to each other and to landscape elements, such as roads and natural features, are critically important to the overall appearance and character of the site.

## **Summary of Historic Overlay District Character**

The community of Centreville was developed as a grid of small-lot properties that primarily faced Braddock Road, forming a main street of residences and businesses. The surrounding area was characterized by small farms supported by industries, such as mills, located along nearby waterways. Most of the historic structures that survive to mark this community are still located along Braddock Road, which once was a major thoroughfare bringing visitors through the center of the town. Today, the role of Braddock Road has been diminished by the establishment of various highways and arterials surrounding the village. The historic core of the Centreville community is relatively invisible to most commuters who travel the surrounding roads every weekday, and its significance remains relatively obscured.

One of the ways to enter the historic core of Centreville is to turn onto Braddock Road from Route 29—also known as Lee Highway. Near its intersection with Mount Gilead Road, Braddock Road is edged by the four buildings that remain from what was once a

denser village landscape: Havener House, Harrison House, Utterback House, and the Centreville Methodist Church. Nearby are Mount Gilead and St. John's Episcopal Church. The Havener House and the Harrison House, two-story wooden structures, stand on raised basements constructed with local fieldstone. The houses are placed within fifteen feet of the road edge, and steps lead up to porches that frame the main entrances, establishing a sense of privacy from the more public area of the road. At one time, fences delineated small, semi-public outdoor open spaces to the front and sides of these houses.

The overall massing of these two buildings is complex, predominantly vertical, with well-articulated features such as projecting porch fronts, symmetrically placed fenestration, heavy gable-end fieldstone chimneys, and steps up to the front entrances. The standing seam metal or asphalt shingle roofs have side gables and a single slope on both the main building and the porch. Windows are one-over-one, double sash, and symmetrically placed about a central hall window. These historic buildings, their materials, scale, fenestration, patterns of spatial organization, responses to natural features and systems, and settings contribute to the character of the historic overlay district.

With their slightly smaller scale and less complex architectural details and massing, the two simple rectangular stone buildings that comprise the Centreville Methodist Church property stand in contrast to the residential structures. Constructed of local fieldstone, the church buildings have flat façades punctuated by symmetrically-placed fenestration. Unlike the dwellings, their gable ends face the road, but like the houses, the church buildings are sited fairly close to the road edge.

In addition to these four buildings, Mount Gilead and St. John's Episcopal Church, located one block from Braddock Road, also contribute to the historic character of Centreville. These two properties, and the property on which the Royal Oaks House once stood, lie in what was once the edge of the village of Centreville, a transitional zone between the village core and its surrounding rural setting. In this zone, lots are larger in size and buildings set farther back from the road. There is also evidence in this area of old property and field boundaries, marked by wire or other types of fencing, and hedgerows.

Scattered amongst the historic buildings are pockets of more contemporary development, constructed with little consideration paid to their compatibility with historic buildings and landscape features. As pressure to develop more parcels within the existing and expanded district grow, it will be increasingly important to guide the development if Centreville's significant historic qualities are to be preserved. These guidelines are intended to serve as a useful manual and reference for the continued preservation of the Centreville Historic Overlay District and the appropriate integration of all new construction.

## Goals for the District

The goals for developing these guidelines for the Centreville Historic Overlay District include:

- Creating a commercial focal point that serves as a community attraction and honors the history of the district.
- Balancing new development needs with means for diminishing vehicular traffic and the demand for parking.
- Enhancing the physical accessibility of the district by providing pedestrian links to and through it.
- Encouraging development of venues for the arts, including music, theater, museums, and visitor contact facilities that provide community interpretive opportunities.
- Providing areas of open space that afford opportunities for quiet meditation, walking, and a refuge of peace within this busy region.
- Educating the community about Centreville's history.
- Maintaining or increasing property values.

## Identification of District Zones and Entry Points

### *The Overall District*

These design guidelines were developed with the overall history of land development in the historic area of Centreville in mind, from its days as a rural crossroads, through the Civil War and renewed interest in urban planning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the suburban development pressures of today. Investigations into the region's history and existing conditions suggest a division of the district into three zones, each with attendant variations on a general set of guidelines. These include the Village Core, Village Edge, and Gateways Zones; there are also four identified points of entry currently associated with the district (*see figure 6-1*).

### *Village Core Zone*

Historic photographs and maps suggest that there was originally a compact core to the village of Centreville that was centered on the northern end of Braddock Road near where it now intersects with Route 28 (*see figure 6-2*). This core was constructed following the original ca. 1800 town plat, with a regular grid (*see figure 6-3*), still quite evident in aerial photographs of the area as late as 1937 (*see figure 2-46*). It appears that, as with the Havener and Harrison houses, buildings constructed in this core were generally two-stories tall, set on high basements, with one-story front porches, side gables, and usually two chimneys, one at each end of the house. The village was fairly dense and most buildings were built close to the edge of Braddock Road (*see figure 6-4*). Some of the houses had small front yards surrounded by picket or post-and-board fencing (*see figure*

6-5). Compatibility with this historic character is a particularly important goal for new development within the Village Core Zone given its likely prominence as a destination for visitors and residents alike.

### *Village Edge Zone*

Historic photographs suggest that beyond the village core the landscape opened up, with buildings placed farther apart, creating a zone of lesser density (*see figure 6-2*). Today this quality remains visible in the vicinity of the Mount Gilead House, Royal Oaks House site, Spindle House, and St. John's Episcopal Church. This suggests that the landscape surrounding the village core served as a transitional zone, an edge where development occurred, but less intensely than in the village core. It appears that lots were larger and dwellings varied in size and finish. This historic pattern stands in contrast to the current trend to development of high density residential subdivisions along the margins of the village core (*see figure 6-6*).

Goals for new development in the Village Edge Zone of the Centreville Historic Overlay District include compatibility with the historic character, and an emphasis on residential rather than commercial or institutional development.

### *Gateways Zone*

The region around the Centreville Historic Overlay District has changed dramatically in the last few decades, especially along Routes 28 and 29, which flank the historic area on both the south and west sides. Braddock Road, however, still intersects with Route 29, leading into the village core. This intersection is currently anonymous in character, but could be considered a good location for a threshold between the historic district and the heavily developed suburban-scale Route 29 corridor. As the boundaries of the district are considered for expansion, this area, as well as other points of entry into the district, could each serve to celebrate arrival. Here, building setbacks, massing, and materials can be used to set the stage for entrance into the historic core where pedestrian-oriented uses and the development of pedestrian-friendly features are dominant.

### *Entry Points*

The Centreville Historic District can be entered at any one of four points around its perimeter. These include the north and south ends of Braddock Road, the north end of Mount Gilead Road, and Wharton Road at the north edge of the St. John's Episcopal Church property. These entry points can serve as thresholds that introduce the historic character and pedestrian focus of the district. Here, paving materials, road corridor edges, fencing, and signage could all be used to provide a distinct sense of place.

## **Guidelines and Recommendations for the Historic Overlay District**

### **Guidelines and Recommendations Common to All Zones**

The following guidelines and recommendations are directed at the district as a whole, and should be applied to new development in addition to the zone-specific guidelines and recommendations described later in this chapter.

#### *Natural Features*

- Preserve and integrate creeks and drainageways into development proposals, using open systems as much as possible.
- Consider establishing a comprehensive stormwater management system to avoid the development of single-lot drainage structures throughout the district.
- Consider reestablishing riparian vegetation along the margins of natural drainageways such as Thames Creek to improve water quality and wildlife habitat (*see figure 6-7*).
- Preserve existing native and non-invasive vegetation and tree cover to the greatest extent possible. Carefully evaluate proposals for removal of individual trees or groupings of trees, with an eye to preserving the overall extent of the tree canopy within the district. Pay special attention to trees over fifty years of age and those growing in rows that might mark historic property lines or fencelines. If a tree must be removed, consider replacement with a tree of similar size and species, referencing the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance, Part 4, 13-400, Tree Cover Requirements section.

#### *Site Access*

- Provide pedestrian access to businesses from adjacent public sidewalks and protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic routes.
- Consider opportunities for providing secondary pedestrian access to sites, and linkages between adjacent sites, by adding paths not necessarily associated with public roadways (*see figure 6-8*).

#### *Parking*

- Design parking lots as small, well-defined areas, separated and screened by landscaping and shaded by trees (*see figure 6-9*).
- Design parking to incorporate and protect large specimen or groupings of trees on a site slated to undergo development (*see figure 6-9*).
- Use changes in paving materials and signage to clearly define pedestrian zones within parking areas and to direct the flow of traffic throughout the site.

### *Pedestrian Circulation*

- Encourage pedestrian circulation within a development through the provision of an internal pedestrian circulation network linked to a public sidewalk system (*see figure 6-8*).
- Develop attractive, universally-accessible pedestrian linkages between buildings and parking areas in all new developments.

### *Landscape Planting*

- Design parking areas to accommodate planting areas for large shade trees that will provide protection from the summer sun and to increase overall district tree canopy. For example, design medians between parking bays to be at least ten feet wide to accommodate rows of shade trees. Consider expanding the width of the bays to accommodate pedestrian walkway connections.
- Follow the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance, Article 13, Landscape and Screening in developing planting designs.

### *Fences and Walls*

- Separate public and private spaces using picket or post-and-rail fencing. Fences should be visually open in character rather than solid and opaque, and less than three feet in height (*see figure 6-10*). If taller, use an open fencing style placed between solid piers.
- Build fences, piers, and walls of the materials traditionally used within the Centreville Historic Overlay District, including painted or stained wood, painted metal, and unpainted or whitewashed local field stone. Avoid chain-link, plastic, fiberglass, or plywood fencing, and concrete block walls.
- Avoid solid privacy fences or walls except where necessary to provide screening for delivery, storage, or utility areas visible from public rights-of-way. Such fences should be built of individual boards rather than plywood, and painted or stained rather than left untreated. Consider adding plantings to help these fences blend into the landscape.
- Construct retaining walls of dry-laid or mortared local fieldstone to match that found in the Mount Gilead gate piers and foundations of historic buildings. Avoid the use of logs, railroad ties, concrete, or concrete block terracing materials.

### *Lighting*

- Control lighting in both quality and intensity. Luminaires should be shielded to prevent light pollution in conformance with “dark sky initiative” (anti-light pollution) guidelines.
- Illuminate walkway, parking, and loading areas using fixtures attached to the building. Low, bollard-type fixtures may also be used in pedestrian areas not

- immediately adjacent to buildings. Consult a professional lighting designer to ensure the most efficient and secure lighting system possible.
- Avoid using high-intensity security lighting visible from public rights-of-way. Such lighting is only appropriate for service entrances or other areas screened from general view.
  - Place light fixtures to provide maximum effective illumination and avoid conflict with expected growth of trees and shrubs.
  - Locate lighting in close proximity to the areas to be illuminated in order to minimize glare. If spotlights or landscape floodlights are used, they should be aimed away from public rights-of-way. Pole-mounted fixtures that direct light downward or outward should not exceed twenty feet in height.
  - Render exterior lighting for vehicular and pedestrian circulation, building and landscape illumination, and security compatible with the architecture of the building and the landscape plans for the site and with each other. Identify a standard fixture style and design to be used within the Centreville Historic Overlay District. Because there is no fixture design that was used historically in this area, the best choice should be between simple, contemporary fixtures that only allude to, rather than copy, fixtures from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*see figure 6-11*).

#### *Utilities*

- Place site utilities, such as heat pumps, air conditioning units, fuel tanks, and dumpsters at the rear of buildings and screen them from public view using masonry walls, privacy fences, evergreen shrubs, or a combination of the three.
- Attach satellite dishes and antennas at roof level and place them in such a way that they are not visible from pedestrian eye level in publicly-accessible outdoor areas.

#### *Signage and Site Furnishings*

- Develop an overall graphics system for the district to be used in public areas for information and direction. This system should be simple and contemporary in design, while graphically communicating the historic character of the district. Signage might include banners, wayfinding kiosks, historic markers, and street signs (*see figure 6-12*).
- Provide guidance to individual business owners to help them work within this system in ways that support their advertising needs and the design of their buildings. New signs should respect the size, scale, and design of historic buildings and should not obscure significant features of the historic building or overshadow or overpower adjacent structures.
- Consider site furnishings in the design of the overall graphics system of the district, ensuring that their style is simple and contemporary in design in order to not confuse the visitor with a “historic” appearance, yet enhances the historic character of remaining buildings and sites (*see figure 6-13*). Furnishings might



include such items as light fixtures, benches, litter containers, ash cans, and newspaper kiosks.

## **Design Guidelines and Recommendations Specific to the Village Core**

### *Buildings and Structures*

The following constitute architectural guidelines for the zone.

#### Uses

- Restrict uses to residential, commercial/retail, office, and institutional.
- Prohibit any drive-in or drive-through facilities.
- Develop the pedestrian level of all buildings for pedestrian-oriented uses, with parking at the rear, and offices and residential on the upper floors.

#### Siting

- Establish a maximum building setback of twenty-five feet from the Braddock Road right-of-way.
- Orient building entrances to Braddock Road and ensure that they are visually defined with elements such as awnings, plantings, or other decorative indicators.
- Site and orient additions to existing historic buildings so that they are subordinate to the existing structure.
- Consider maintaining a relatively urban character along the Braddock Road streetscape, with wide sidewalks able to accommodate shade trees, sidewalk cafés, and other pedestrian-oriented activities (*see figure 6-14*).

#### Size and Scale

- Encourage the development of small lots with numerous distinct businesses and residences.
- Consider establishing a maximum building height of thirty-five feet.
- Design buildings to convey a human sense of scale by establishing layers of public and private space, including a public, street-level space, a semi-private space—such as that created by a porch, and private space within the building envelope (*see figure 6-15*).
- Detail buildings to promote a sense of human scale, using elements such as recessed or projecting entries, multi-paned windows, porches or other façade projections, detailed or textured wall surfaces, gabled roofs, and pedestrian amenities.

### Massing

- Ensure that building massing is compatible with that of existing historic buildings.
- Use complex massing when constructing larger buildings to convey a sense of human scale (*see figure 6-16*).
- Group several small buildings, rather than constructing one large building.
- Employ gable roofs, and pitch at the same slope as existing historic buildings.

### Construction Materials

- Ensure that materials are compatible with those used in surrounding historic buildings, including local fieldstone masonry, brick, and wood.
- Avoid the use of reflective or tinted glass in windows or large expanses of undivided window glass.
- Avoid the use of artificial veneer materials such as simulated stucco, cast stone, and brick or plastic.
- Construct exposed foundation walls of local fieldstone.
- Encourage the use of traditional roofing materials, such as standing seam metal, slate, and wood singles.
- Select colors that are compatible with the existing historic buildings.

### Design Expression

- Avoid the use of trademark building designs, which are typical of some franchised businesses.
- Interpret, rather than imitate, local historic vernacular design.

### *Natural Features*

The Village Core Zone of the Centreville Historic Overlay District contains natural features and systems that can be protected and enhanced to contribute to its character. In particular, celebrating the natural processes of Thames Creek by encouraging the establishment of riparian vegetation along its margins is recommended. Interpretation of the role of the creek in local industry and potable water supply is also recommended. In addition:

- Retain the natural form of the high point where St. John's Episcopal Church is located and the associated natural topography as it falls gradually away from this point in any plans for development within the Village Core (*see figure 3-2*).

### *Site Access*

The Village Core contains a large number of small parcels along Braddock and Mount Gilead Roads. Individual driveway access to each of these parcels would increase traffic inefficiency and might serve to threaten the safety of pedestrians in the area. The

guidelines that follow are intended to address reducing these conflicts and increasing the efficiency of overall vehicular access to the Centreville Historic Overlay District.

- Consider access to development sites from secondary roads or common driveways whenever possible instead of directly from Braddock Road.
- Design driveway entrances to be narrow and to provide access to more than one site and a shared parking area when access from Braddock is the only choice. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian crossings where driveways intersect walkways.

### *Parking*

Photographs of historic Centreville reveal a town that was small in scale and oriented towards Braddock Road. Newer developments in the area have tended to place parking areas in front of or to the side of buildings, isolating them from the streetscape and interrupting the pedestrian scale visible in the historic images (*see figures 6-17*).

Contemporary parking codes often relate more to individual parcel requirements than district-wide needs, increasing impervious cover and inhibiting pedestrian circulation. These guidelines are intended to address these problems:

- Consider shared parking arrangements in which a central lot serves several businesses, allowing the user to park once for several errands or other activities. This is regulated under the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance, Article 11, Section 11-104.
- Place parking lots to the rear of buildings along Braddock Road or in parking decks that have retail shops along the pedestrian level, ensuring that buildings line the streets to allow for a more pleasurable pedestrian experience.
- Incorporate pedestrian pathways within the parking lots to minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic (*see figure 6-8*).

### *Pedestrian Circulation*

Walking within the community of Centreville was once a way of life and it is important that visitors have opportunities to experience the Centreville Historic Overlay District as pedestrians. A recommendation has been made in the treatment chapter of this CLR to reestablish the road (Ralls Street) that ran between the Mount Gilead and Spindle properties as a pedestrian link between the residences to the northeast and St. John's Episcopal Church, and properties along Braddock Road. Potential higher density historic infill and other developments along Braddock Road also suggest a need to improve pedestrian access. Also, the area to the west of Braddock Road could be developed to reestablish connections to the main part of town. To effect this goal:

- Provide public sidewalks or paths on both sides of Braddock Road.
- Pave sidewalks or paths with a hard, even surface, using materials that incorporate variety in their width, color, and texture to provide visual interest and express the hierarchy of routes and destinations.

### *Landscape Planting*

Little is known about the planted landscape of historic Centreville, so any attempt at a restoration of historic plant materials would be speculative at best. Historic photographs suggest a working environment sheltered by shade trees with minimal ornamental planting save an occasional hardy flowering shrub. New plantings can be used to enhance the appearance of the Centreville Historic Overlay District by adding color, texture, and screening as needed, as well as improving microclimates by providing shade and windbreaks for pedestrians. The following guidelines offer ways to add plantings within the Village Core:

- Consider that historic photographs indicate that shade trees once grew along Braddock Road in front of buildings (*see figure 6-2*). Because the road runs southeast to northwest, buildings on the east side are exposed to direct sun in the summer. Trees planted along the road could provide much needed shade in the summer for pedestrian comfort and to lower air-conditioning requirements. Trees appear not to have been planted traditionally in straight rows, so consider grouping new plantings loosely and with a mixture of species.
- Design plantings within the Village Core to be simple, expressing the horizontal planes of groundcover and tree canopy, and sparingly ornamented with flowering shrubs or perennial herbaceous species.
- Screen views of the sound wall from Braddock Road to the north using a combination of large and small trees, as well as evergreen shrubs (*see figure 6-18*). Design the plantings to convey an informal vernacular appearance rather than a formal one.
- Consider adding plantings along Thames Creek to help retain and enhance its riparian character and increase environmental diversity in the area.

### *Fences and Walls*

Historic photographs of Centreville show that low—three to four foot height—fencing, particularly wooden picket and post-and-rail fencing, was often used to separate front yards from the street or to contain side yards (*see figure 6-10*). Fencing also typically helped define a hierarchy of spaces from public to private in historic Centreville. Some metal picket fencing is also found in the area at the Mount Gilead property, as are mortared fieldstone columns that serve as gate piers and mark entrances. Consider materials for new fence and wall features based on the recommendations included in the general recommendations and guidelines section above.

### *Lighting*

There is very little information available regarding the historic use of outdoor lighting in Centreville. It was a small community, and public areas were probably not lit as they might have been in larger towns and cities. Future increases in density and uses will likely encourage night-time pedestrian use and a need for lighting for safety and aesthetics. Today, goose-neck streetlights provide most of the night-time illumination in

the area. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Utilities*

There is very little information available regarding the treatment of utilities within the zone. Site utilities should not be visually apparent at any time of the day from public areas. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Signage and Site Furnishings*

There is little information available about the use of signage or site furnishings in historic Centreville, but because it was a small working community, it is likely that signage was informal and there were few public site furnishings. Future growth within the district will suggest the need for an identity system that supports visual clarity and a stronger sense of place. Features that should be designed to support the identity system include site furnishings and signage. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

## **Design Guidelines and Recommendations Specific to the Village Edge**

### *Buildings and Structures*

The following constitute architectural guidelines for the zone.

#### Uses

- Restrict uses to residential, office, and institutional.

#### Siting

- Maintain the minimum building setback included in the underlying zoning district, which is at least forty feet from the adjacent right-of-way. There is no maximum recommended.

#### Size and Scale

- Maintain the building height restriction included with the underlying zoning district.
- Allow larger lot sizes within this zone.

#### Massing

- Use complex massing when constructing larger buildings to convey a sense of human scale (*see figure 6-16*).
- Group several small buildings, rather than constructing one large building.

### Construction Materials

- Ensure materials are compatible with those used in surrounding historic buildings, including local fieldstone masonry, brick, and wood.
- Avoid the use of reflective or tinted glass in windows or large expanses of undivided window glass.
- Avoid the use of artificial veneer materials such as simulated stucco, cast stone, and brick or plastic.
- Construct exposed foundation walls of local fieldstone.
- Encourage the use of traditional roofing materials, such as standing seam metal, slate, and wood singles.
- Select colors that are compatible with the existing historic buildings.

### Design Expression

- Avoid the use of trademark building designs, which are typical of some franchised businesses.
- Interpret, rather than imitate, local historic vernacular design.

### *Natural Features*

The Village Edge Zone contains natural features and systems that should be protected to enhance its character. The following guideline directs retention and enhancement of natural site amenities:

- Retain the natural form of the high point where St. John's Episcopal Church is located, and the associated natural topography, as it falls gradually away from this point in any plans for development within the zone (*see figure 3-2*).

### *Site Access*

The Village Edge Zone contains larger parcels than those found along Braddock Road, so individual driveway access to each parcel is not as much an issue for pedestrian safety in the area. However, to increase the efficiency of vehicular access and the pedestrian safety within the district:

- Design driveway entrances to be narrow and provide access to more than one site and a shared parking area whenever possible. The entrances should also provide for safe and convenient pedestrian crossing where they intersect walkways.

### *Parking*

Historic photographs of Centreville reveal a town small in scale, densely built, and oriented towards Braddock Road. Outside the Village Core, however, the built environment was much less dense. Recommendations for the Village Edge Zone support perpetuation of a much less densely built environment, easing pressure on parking requirements. However, parking lot design should still:

- Incorporate shaded pedestrian pathways within the parking lots to minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic (*see figure 6-8*).

### *Pedestrian Circulation*

Walking within the community of Centreville was once much more common than it is today. Therefore, it is important that the visitor have opportunities to experience the Centreville Historic Overlay District as a pedestrian. Recommendations have been made in the treatment plan chapter of this CLR for reestablishing the road that ran between the Mount Gilead and Spindle properties (Ralls Street) as a pedestrian link between residences to the northeast and St. John's Episcopal Church to properties along Braddock Road. These guidelines offer a way to incorporate effective pedestrian circulation into the site design process:

- Establish a crosswalk across Mount Gilead Road between the reestablished road and the residential area to the northeast.
- Pave paths with hard, even surfaced materials that incorporate variety in the width, color, and texture to provide visual interest and express the hierarchy of routes and destinations.

### *Landscape Planting*

There is little information available regarding plantings around buildings during the historic era. Historic photographs suggest a working environment sheltered by shade trees with minimal ornamental planting save an occasional hardy flowering shrub. However, the lower density suggested for the Village Edge provides more room for additional plantings, such as ornamental or vegetable gardens. Because little is known about the planted landscape and gardens of historic Centreville, attempted restorations of historic plant materials would be speculative at best. However, new plantings can be used to enhance the appearance in the Village Edge Zone by adding color, texture, and screening as needed, and to improve microclimates by providing shade and windbreaks for pedestrians. The following guidelines offer ways to add plantings in the Village Edge Zone:

- Consider using trees along Mount Gilead Road to provide shade for cars and pedestrians. Plantings should be loose and informal in nature, and include a mixture of species.
- Consider plantings along Thames Creek and its tributaries to help retain and enhance its riparian character and increase environmental diversity.

### *Fences and Walls*

Historic photographs of Centreville show that low—three- to four-foot height—fencing, particularly wooden picket and post-and-rail styles, was often used to separate front yards from the street or to contain side yards. Fencing front yards also helped define a hierarchy of spaces from public to private that is typical of houses in this area. In addition, some metal picket fencing is found in the area at the Mount Gilead property. Also found at this property are the mortared fieldstone columns that serve as gate piers and mark its

entrances. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Lighting*

There is very little information available regarding the historic use of outdoor lighting in Centreville. It was a small community and public areas were not likely lit as they might have been in larger towns and cities. Future increases in density and uses will likely encourage night-time pedestrian use and a need for lighting for safety and aesthetics. Today, goose-neck streetlights provide most of the night-time illumination in the area. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Utilities*

There is very little information available regarding the treatment of utilities within the zone. Site utilities should not be visually apparent at any time of the day from public areas. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Signage and Site Furnishings*

There is little information available about the use of signage or site furnishings in historic Centreville, but because it was a small working community, it is likely that signage was informal and there were few public site furnishings. Future growth within the district will suggest the need for an identity system that supports visual clarity and a stronger sense of place. Features that should be designed to support the identity system include site furnishings and signage. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

## **Design Guidelines and Recommendations Specific to Gateways**

### *Buildings and Structures*

The following constitute architectural guidelines for the zone.

#### Uses

- Restrict uses to residential, commercial/retail, office, and institutional.
- Orient first floor levels of all buildings to public use, such as retail shops, banks, or restaurant uses.

#### Siting

- Establish a maximum building setback of twenty-five feet.
- Orient entrances to the street to encourage pedestrian use.

#### Size and Scale

- Establish a maximum building height of thirty-five feet along the street, but allow buildings to step up in height further back from the street.



- Encourage the use of details that promote a sense of human scale, such as recessed or projecting entries, multi-paned windows, porches or other façade projections, detailed or textured wall surfaces, gabled roofs, and pedestrian amenities.

### Massing

- Use complex massing when constructing larger buildings to convey a sense of human scale.

### Construction Materials

- Ensure materials are compatible with those used in surrounding historic buildings, including local fieldstone masonry, brick, and wood.
- Avoid the use of reflective or tinted glass in windows or large expanses of undivided window glass.

### Design Expression

- Avoid the use of trademark building designs, which are typical of some franchised businesses.
- Interpret, rather than imitate, local historic vernacular design.

### *Natural Features*

In comparison to the Village Core and the Village Edge Zones, the Gateways Zone contains fewer undeveloped natural features and systems to protect and enhance. However, the following guideline can direct treatment of what remains in the area:

- Take into consideration the natural sloping topography of the area and retain it at a macro level in plans for new development.

### *Site Access*

There are a number of small parcels along Braddock Road in the Gateways Zone. Individual driveway access to each of these parcels could increase traffic inefficiency and threaten the safety of pedestrians in the area. These guidelines address reducing these conflicts and increasing the efficiency of vehicular access to the district.

- Consider access to development sites from secondary roads or common driveways whenever possible instead of directly from Braddock Road.
- Design driveway entrances to be narrow and to provide access to more than one site. A shared parking area when entering from Braddock is the only choice. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian crossings where driveways intersect walkways.

### *Parking*

Photographs of historic Centreville reveal a town that was small in scale and oriented towards Braddock Road. Newer developments in the area have tended to place parking

areas in front of or to the side of buildings, isolating them from the streetscape and interrupting the pedestrian scale visible in the historic images (*see figures 6-17*). Contemporary parking codes often relate more to individual parcel requirements rather than district-wide needs, increasing impervious cover and inhibiting pedestrian circulation. These guidelines are intended to address these problems:

- Consider shared parking arrangements in which a central lot serves several businesses, allowing the user to park once for several errands or other activities. This is regulated under the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance, Article 11, Section 11-104.
- Place parking to the rear of buildings along Braddock Road or in parking decks that have retail shops along the pedestrian level, ensuring that buildings line the streets to allow for a more pleasurable pedestrian experience.
- Incorporate defined pedestrian pathways within the parking lots to minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic.

### *Pedestrian Circulation*

The Gateways Zone can be designed in a way that allows the visitor to experience the introduction to the Centreville Historic Overlay District as a pedestrian, much in the way the area was experienced historically. Potential higher density historic infill and other developments along Braddock Road also suggest a need to improve pedestrian access. These guidelines offer a way to incorporate effective pedestrian circulation into the site design process:

- Provide public sidewalks or paths on both sides of Braddock Road from the gateway at Route 29, and in association with the other roads leading into the district.
- Encourage pedestrian use by assuring that the sidewalk level of each building in the Gateways Zone provides pedestrian-oriented services, such as small shops or restaurants.
- Design paths in the Gateways Zone to communicate a more urban feel than those in the Village Zone. Pave them with a more formal, hard, even surface material such as brick or concrete. Consider variety in the width, color, and texture to provide visual interest and express the hierarchy of routes and destinations

### *Landscape Planting*

Photographs of historic Centreville suggest a working environment, sheltered by shade trees with little ornamental planting. Little is known about the planted landscape and gardens of historic Centreville, so any attempted restoration of historic plant materials would be speculative at best. However, new plantings can be used to enhance the appearance of the Centreville Historic Overlay District by adding color, texture, and screening as needed, as well as improving microclimates by providing shade and windbreaks for pedestrians. The following guidelines offer ways to add plantings within the district:

- Historic photographs indicate that shade trees once grew along Braddock Road to the sides and fronts of buildings. Because the road runs southeast to northwest, buildings, especially on the east side, are exposed to the afternoon sun. Trees planted along the road can provide much needed shade in the summer for pedestrian comfort and to lower air-conditioning requirements. Because the Gateways Zone will have a denser, more urban character than the Village Core or Village Edge Zone, street trees can be planted in formal rows on both sides of the street, enhancing the pedestrian scale of the street and providing scale and enclosure.
- Design plantings along Braddock Road, especially in the Gateways Zone, to be simple and to express the horizontal planes of ground and tree canopy characteristic of its urban character.

### *Fences and Walls*

Historic photographs of Centreville show that low—three- to four-foot-height—fencing, particularly wooden picket and post-and-rail fencing, was often used to separate front yards from the street or to contain side yards. Metal picket fencing is found in the area at the Mount Gilead property, as are mortared fieldstone columns that serve as gate piers and mark entrances. The third type of barrier is the sound wall that protects the community from the noise of Route 28. In the Gateways Zone, fencing or walls should not be used in front of buildings, but should be used to enclose parking areas or to screen utilities or trash collection areas. See the general guidelines and recommendations and section above for more information.

### *Lighting*

There is very little information available regarding the historic use of outdoor lighting in Centreville. It was a small community; public areas were not likely lit as they might have been in larger towns and cities. Future increases in density and uses will likely encourage nighttime pedestrian use and a need for lighting for safety and aesthetics. Today, goose-neck streetlights provide most of the nighttime illumination in the area. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Utilities*

There is very little information available regarding the treatment of utilities within the zone. Site utilities should not be visually apparent at any time of the day from public areas. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Signage and Site Furnishings*

There is little information available about the use of signage or site furnishings in historic Centreville, but because it was a small working community, it is likely that signage was informal and there were few public site furnishings. Future growth within the district will suggest the need for an identity system that supports visual clarity and a stronger sense of place. Features that should be designed to support the identity system include site

furnishings and signage. See the general guidelines and recommendations section above for more information.

### *Entry Points*

The historic character of the Village Core can be further emphasized by the placement of site furnishings at its entry points. Local materials and construction techniques described earlier can be used to create markers and signage that signal entrances into this unique district. The design could potentially use materials such as local fieldstone. There are many examples of historic district entrance designs which can be used to inspire the development of an appropriate solution for the Centreville Historic Overlay District (*see figure 6-19*).